

Accordingly, reduction in the taxpayer-funded price support program would not directly impact farmers, yet would still produce the necessary tax savings.

Mr. Speaker, this summer I had an opportunity to talk to dairymen throughout my district, and they are hurting. They are hurting in a way that they have not been in many, many years. We must, at a time like this, be cautious in how we tamper with price supports for dairy producers because there is a real danger that many of these small and even midsize family farmers will be put out of business by a precipitous policy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to exchange my special order time with that of the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], and that I be listed later in the day, if that is all right with the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from West Virginia?

There was no objection.

THE BALANCED BUDGET PLAN, MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I was very proud today when President Clinton indicated that he would not support, and he would, in fact, veto the continuing resolution because of the increase in the Medicare part B premium.

I think that the public needs to know, and it needs to be reflected more and more amongst ourselves in the House, that essentially this continuing resolution takes away the provision in the current law which, as of January 1, would decrease the amount or the percentage that senior citizens have to pay for their Medicare part B premium, and what the continuing resolution proposes is that the percentage be kept as it is now, which would essentially force an increase in part B premiums as much as, say, \$10 over the next year per month for those senior citizens. That includes almost all senior citizens who take advantage and pay to have themselves covered under Medicare part B, which pays for physician care.

It is amazing to me, Mr. Speaker, that at a time when we spent almost a month or 2 months or even more trying to deal with the whole budget and

come up with the reconciliation and also deal with Medicare, that the Republican leadership continues to insist on increasing Medicare premiums before the time when they ever put together the budget or even have a conference with the budget reconciliation conferees.

I would very much right now like to be at a meeting with the rest of the conferees, with the Democrats and the Republicans, dealing with this budget, dealing with Medicare, dealing with Medicaid. But, so far, all of the meetings have been in secret, just with the Republicans.

I was appointed a conferee for the budget reconciliation a few weeks ago. But we still have not met, because all of the negotiations are taking place on the Republican side without any input or any opportunity for Democrats.

In fact today, in the Washington Post there was an article that said, "Balanced budget plan near complete, Congress may consider massive reconciliation measure on Wednesday." Well, today is Monday. We have not even had a meeting of the reconciliation conferees that was originally called for tonight, but then it was cancelled at the last minute. Now we are told it is tomorrow.

But in the meantime, obviously the Republicans have met in secret and have already decided how they are going to increase the cost to seniors for Medicare, cut their Medicare benefits, and provide tax cuts primarily for wealthy Americans.

There are two very important issues in this budget conference that affect Medicare that I think need to be addressed. In the Senate, unlike the House, nursing home standards were kept intact. In the Senate, unlike the House, the safety net for children, for disabled persons, for pregnant women was kept intact so that there is a guarantee, there continues to be an entitlement in the Senate version of this budget bill that pregnant women, the disabled, and children will get Medicaid and will have health care coverage. But not in the House version.

This is a very important issue, whether or not we are going to continue to have nursing home standards, whether or not we are going to continue to have Medicaid benefits for these disadvantaged groups, and yet there is no meeting of the conferees. Everything is done in secret with the Republican leadership.

Today, there was an article in the New York Times that pointed out that it is very likely, under the Republican leadership bill, that there will become a shortage of nursing home beds for the elderly in the next few years because with the significant amount of money being reduced for Medicaid, there simply will not be any incentive to even have Medicaid beds in nursing homes.

Similarly, we are told the Medicaid safety net for children could be imperiled with the Republican leadership bill because basically the States will not

have the money to provide Medicaid coverage for children.

So I would really like to be a part of this conference where we discuss what is going to happen to the future of our children in terms of their health care coverage, to the future of our nursing homes, whether there will be quality nursing homes, whether there will be enough beds for our citizens in the future.

We do not have that opportunity.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KLECZKA. If I understand correctly, you indicated that the massive bill changing Medicare as we know it is currently being worked on by a group of legislators. Then why, in your estimation, would the Republicans want to put the increase in Medicare premiums for our seniors in this continuing bill to keep the Government running past midnight tonight? Why would they pull that section out and put in the simple bill to keep the Government running? What is the rationale there?

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Mr. PALLONE. My understanding is they are so determined that this increase take effect on January 1, that they do not want to negotiate it, they do not want to discuss it, they just want to make sure it is included in the continuing resolution so it takes effect with those increases on January 1.

QUIT STALLING ON BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. FOLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to read an editorial from the Port St. Lucie News. The editorial says "Quit Stalling on Budget."

[From the Port St. Lucie News, Nov. 13, 1995]

QUIT STALLING ON BUDGET

The budget debate now underway is messy and inefficient and may ultimately prove very expensive. It is also irresponsible government and reflects no credit on the White House or the Republican-led Congress.

Enacting an annual budget is Congress' principal job, one in which this Congress is embarrassingly behind schedule with only two of 13 appropriations bills enacted. The fiscal year the lawmakers are arguing over is already more than one month gone and will likely be a fourth over with by the time a package is passed.

Congress dug itself into that hole, largely because of deep and continuing disagreements among Republicans newly in the majority.

That led to the latest obstacle to passing a budget, the provocation of an unnecessary veto fight with Clinton by attempting to use stopgap bills to pass measures—elimination of the Commerce Department, restrictions on lobbying by tax-exempt groups, higher Medicare premiums—that should be dealt with elsewhere in the legislative process.

Despite his belated discovery of presidential veto powers, Clinton has given Congress little sense of where he will stand and fight. He absented himself from the budget

process the first eight months of the year and hasn't been much of a participant since.

Clinton may find it personally satisfying—and his campaign advisers politically profitable—to let Congress battle itself bloody over the federal budget. But it is not good government, and it certainly isn't leadership.

Thanks to this impasse, the government may partially shut down Tuesday, an unnecessary bit of budget brinkmanship that wastes time and money, not to mention the damaging impact on the morale of the 800,000 or so government workers whose livelihoods are being treated so cavalierly.

Thanks to this same impasse, the government may bump up against the debt limit late next week and go into technical default. While domestic bond-buyers may not mind, seeing this as a promising sign of fiscal austerity to come, foreign bond-buyers may simply see us as deadbeats and drive up the cost of borrowing for years to come.

To the president and to Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Americans should say what generations of poker players have said when the pot was tied up with pointless bickering: "Gentlemen, shut up and deal."

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to resolve the issue before the Congress. We would not run a business like this in America, telling our customers that we may or may not be open tomorrow, that we may or may not be there to serve their needs. But at the same time, we have heard bickering from both sides of the aisle, heated rhetoric, about destroying Medicare, about hurting senior citizens.

I have told this story many times. My grandmother came from Poland. She came with a sponsor, a job waiting, a clean bill of health. She worked as a maid in a Travel Lodge motel, all to be part of this democracy. She depended on Medicare and she depended on Social Security. So I am one Member of Congress here to protect that.

But let us make no mistake about it: The balanced budget is necessary to restore fiscal sanity to this Nation. We are borrowing and borrowing and borrowing moneys that we simply do not have. Why are Members of Congress retiring in droves? Why is everybody saying they want out of this job? Because it is no longer fun to go around your community and say "no" to people.

For years you have been able to say I will give you a new Post Office, I will build you a new bridge, I will fix something in your community, I will build a new center for you, all with the taxpayers' nickel, all borrowed dollars. They went back year after year and said look at me, I am the hero, I have done all of these things for you, you must reelect me.

Now we go to Congress and get elected and say "no" to people and spending money and "yes" to balancing the budget, and people are mad at us. But by God, that is fiscal responsibility. It is happening in our families. It is required of our businesses. A balanced budget is no different than being an American consumer, an American business owner.

But I do think it is wrong we are holding this Government hostage and

not meeting at the White House this very hour to solve this problem. I do think it is wrong on both sides of the aisle that we are not seriously debating the issue as we sit here today. I do not think I deserve my paycheck after tomorrow if we are not going to be working. Congress should not get paid either. If the employees of the Federal Government are going to be told they do not need to be here, I think there are maybe 435 nonessential employees right here in this body.

I think it is time we faced the convictions we have. I think it is necessary we balance the budget. I think it is necessary to bring our fiscal house in order. But I think it is also necessary that both sides, Democrats and Republicans, stop the haranguing, stop the finger pointing, stop the name calling, and start debating the very issues that will save our fiscal sanity for the years to come.

I think it is that important. I think it is important for ourselves, for the seniors that live in our communities, for our children, and for America's future.

PASS SIMPLE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, this is a process that we are going through tonight, and unfortunately will be likely going through tomorrow with the shutdown of Federal Government, that should not be happening. In West Virginia there are over 17,000 Federal employees, many of whom will be furloughed. They will not be able to offer the services essential to West Virginia, and their own lives will be placed in uncertainty.

This is a terrible way to do business. The first day or so, people probably will not notice. It is true, Social Security offices will not be handling claims. A day or two you can get by. Over time, you see a steady degradation of Government services and the very important functions that Government employees perform.

In our own offices we have two district offices. The decision by the Republican leadership, as I understand it, essentially says that basically only legislative personnel can be working. We will be furloughing roughly half of the congressional staff. We will leave one person in the Charleston office and one person in the Martinsburg office to handle emergencies, but aside from that, our staff as well will be furloughed. Of course, the mobile offices, the ones that visit the county everyday, in a different county every day of the month, they will be furloughed as well. So I think it is a sorry state of affairs that Congress has reached this point.

I think though it is also important to look at what is at stake and why we

are here. There are actually two bills at stake, both basically simple. One says that you continue the Government services for about 2 to 3 more weeks. The second one would say that the Federal Government is empowered to continue borrowing to pay back debts.

In both cases the House has passed this bill, but, under the Republican leadership, measures were added that make those bills totally unacceptable. What should have been basically one simple sheet that says "Continue the government," or "You are empowered to continue to borrow money to pay pack debts," what could have been one sheet, two or three paragraphs, turned into hundreds of pages of special riders, strings attached, and basically trying to work to enact the Contract With America and the basic budget bill that is so much in controversy.

I think it should also be pointed out, I have heard allegations that somehow the President has not done his job. Let me look at the facts. The reason this has come about is because the budget bill needs negotiating, right? So people ought to be negotiating. The only problem is, there is no budget bill. There is no reconciliation bill. We have yet to get that on the floor of the House.

Incidentally, it is months overdue. By the same token, there are 13 appropriation bills that must pass the Congress and be signed by the President that make up next year's budget. They all are to be done by October 1. Six weeks later this Congress has enacted into law only two of the 13 bills. Eleven are out there somewhere, drifting in the nether world of this Capitol. So the President has had very little that he can actually begin negotiating on, because the Congress has not signed it.

Why not just go ahead? And I had this question on a talk show today at home, Mr. Speaker. "Why not go ahead, BOB, and just vote for this continuing resolution? Just vote for the debt ceiling. It is only a couple weeks, and send it on down to the President."

The trouble with that is this: If I voted for that debt ceiling the other day, I would have voted for a \$7 increase in Medicare part B premiums for every senior citizen in West Virginia, kicking them up from \$46.10 to roughly \$53 on January 1. Merry Christmas, mother and father. What kind of vote is that?

I would have voted for the Republican budget in effect, and put into play already many of the items that still need to be negotiated between the White House and Congress.

I would have been in effect voting for stiff Medicare cuts, one-third of which is needed to save the funds, only \$90 billion, not \$270 billion as is in that budget. I would have voted for Medicaid cuts that would have put West Virginia \$4 billion in the hole over a 7-year period. I would have voted for tax breaks for the wealthy and tax increases for low income working people. That is not a good deal. That should